

Testimony of Susan K. Dzis

Phelps Ingersoll Center for Children N. Middlesex YMCA, Middletown CT

Before the Human Services Committee

March 12, 2015, SB 1044

Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, and members of the Committee,

I am testifying on behalf of Senate Bill 1044, for higher wages:

When I first attended college, my advisor asked me what my intensions were, and my reply to him was, "I want to be a teacher," that was my passion. His reply was "you will never survive on that".

As a single woman, my financial responsibilities have grown over time, but recently everything has come to fruition.

In the past year I was forced to sell my residence, not because of the mortgage payment, but due to continuous tax increases over the past thirteen years. My low wages as an Early Childhood Educator did not allow me to hold on to my home for retirement. This forced me to relocate closer to work and away from the only family I have, my mother who is in a convalescent home, and my two brothers.

I have dedicated the past 20 years of my professional life to the field of Early Childhood Education. I have worked diligently to maintain my position through all the new State mandates and certifications without financial assistance.

I made a coconscious decision to work at the NAEYC accredited and School Readiness funded preschool at the Northern Middlesex YMCA in Middletown, CT. I have invested the past eight years in this community and it's families along with their everyday life challenges. It has always been my passion to educate and work with children and families that are less fortunate then I was growing up.

Unfortunately, I now find myself living in the same financial strife as the young children and families I am committed to educating. I struggle to manage paying for my rent, utilities, groceries, and gas, clothing and medical expenses with the salary

I am earning. I end up using my own personal finances to purchase school supplies and educational tools for the young children and families I am helping to educate.

Financially, I do not have much more to give up. I had invested in a home for my retirement, which is now gone. I have given up cable and internet for many years, no new cars, and I never able to purchase any type of luxuries or even dream about a weekend vacation.

I see new generations of young people coming into this profession and I can't imagine how they will pay their debts (school loans) back to the Government or begin their own families along with being able to provide efficiently for their young children. How will they survive? What does the future hold for people who are passionate about working with young children?

The School Readiness Program mandates that we are open 260 days a year, whereas the public school system is only required to be open 180 days a year with summers off. This means we work 80 days more than public school teachers, with no summers off, and our wages are over \$30,000 below per year.

In order to maintain our status as Early Childhood Educators, we have to continue our education with no financial assistance and no increase in salary. Every time there is a cost of living increase, there is no compensation for us, in fact, as costs go up, we are making less each year.

I am extremely concerned about how the low wages are and will continue to negatively impact the future quality of Early Childhood Educators and the education of younger generations to come. *After all, aren't our children the greatest asset we have?*

Thank you for your time,

*Susan K. Dzis*

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